The Residual Poetics of Mutiny in Allan Sekula's *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum* (2010-2013)

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Abstract

This essay proposes a possible conceptual framework for the understanding of Allan Sekula's last and unfinished project *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum* (2010-2013). It explores how the vast collection of vintage objects Sekula assembled for *The Dockers' Museum* allows to build imaginative sequential geographies of historical maritime struggle. It presents a reading of six images, selected from the corpus of *The Dockers' Museum* and considers each image as a micro-historical narrative related to Sekula's interest in mutiny as a form of resistance. The analysis is informed by a close study of Allan Sekula's earlier project *Fish Story* (1989-1995) and essays, (unpublished) lectures, interviews and personal notebooks related to *Fish Story*. Taken together the images retrace a residual poetics of lost collectivities and outbursts of social conflict and connect instances of human agency that metonymically evoke the intersubjective dimension of work and struggle.

Key words

Allan Sekula; *Ship of Fools / The Dockers Museum*; *Fish Story*; mutiny; photography

Résumé

Cet essai propose une possible conceptualisation pour la compréhension du dernier projet de Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum* (2010-2013). Il explore comment la vaste collection d'objets assemblée pour *The Dockers' Museum* permet de construire des géographies séquentielles imaginatives des lutte sociales maritimes. Il présente une lecture de six images, choisies dans le corpus du *Dockers' Museum,* et considère chaque image comme un récit micro-historique lié à l'intérêt de Sekula pour la mutinerie en tant que forme de résistance. Cette lecture est informée par une étude approfondie du projet antérieur d'Allan Sekula *Fish Story* (1989-1995) ainsi que d'essais, de conférences (certaines non publiées), d'interviews et de cahiers personnels liés à *Fish Story*. Dans leur mise en rapport, les images retracent une poétique résiduelle des collectivités perdues et des conflits sociaux et relient des instances d'agentivité humaine qui évoquent de façon métonymique la dimension intersubjective du travail et de la lutte.

Mots-clés

Allan Sekula; *Ship of Fools / The Dockers Museum*; *Fish Story*; mutinerie; photographie

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> "Something else, something resistant and resilient and hopeful is retrieved from the slagheap of dominant culture, from tradition, from 'popular memory,' from political struggles and from everyday experience" (Sekula, 1983, 150).

Introduction

Starting from his seminal project *Fish Story* (1989-1995), artist and critic Allan Sekula (1951-2013) set out to resist what he considered forms of cognitive blindness *vis-a-vis* the economic and social realities of maritime space. Such discourses proclaimed a dematerialization of the global economy into a smooth, frictionless space of interlinked flows. To expose the fictitious character of that dematerialization, Sekula turned his attention to the slowness and materiality of the global supply chain, attempting in the process to critically re-inscribe and reclaim the presence and the concomitant friction of human labor within the complexities of the logistical system. For him, human presence had become increasingly misrecognized, obfuscated or even erased from such a system. He formulated his resistance through a succession of photographic works, such as *Fish Story*, *Freeway to China (Version 2 for Liverpool)* (1998-1999), *Black Tide/Marea Negra* (2002-2003), and several essay films such as *Tsukiji* (2001), *The Lottery of the Sea* (2006) and *The Forgotten Space* (2010/co-directed with Noel Burch).

The final maritime-centered project that should be added to this list is Sekula's last work *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum* (2010-2013), which is the focus of this essay. Due to his untimely demise in 2013, this work remained in an unfinished state. This project consists of two lines of inquiry that stand in dialogue with each other: *Ship of Fools* and *The Dockers' Museum*. *Ship of Fools* (Fig. 1) consists of a sequence of documentary photographs made during his voyage on the campaign ship Global Mariner. This vessel was used for a transnational solidarity campaign initiated by the global union federation ITF (International Transport Workers Federation). The campaign, contesting the flags of convenience system, had an unprecedented scale spanning 20 months (between 1998 and 2000) and organized political actions in ports in 80 countries on all continents.[1] The campaign aimed to connect the local struggles of maritime workers while simultaneously reaching out to the larger community of worldwide alter-globalization movement at the turn of the century. During his travels aboard the ship, Sekula produced a "group portrait" of this activist response to neoliberal corporate globalization in maritime industries.[2] He wrote extensively on the voyage, describing it poignantly as a "floating version of the agit-train" (Sekula, 2002, 32).

1 The FOC system is a legal construction that permits merchant ships to sail under the flags of other countries than those of the ship's beneficial owners. By registering their ships in nations like Panama or Liberia, which have lax policies on wages or worker safety and with little or no government enforcement of existing regulations, shipping companies evade the collective bargaining agreements of their country of origin. As a result, shipping crews are subject to working on substandard vessels with inadequate wages, hazardous conditions, and without social protection. See, for example, De Sombre, 2006, 69-84.

2 For an extensive discussion of this campaign and Sekula's participation, see Van Gelder and Verbeeck, 2015.

Figure 1: Allan Sekula: Ship of Fools, installation view, M HKA, Antwerp, 2010 [in the building of the Antwerp Fotomuseum].
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The second line of inquiry, entitled *The Dockers' Museum*, consists of a heterogeneous ensemble of around 1,200 objects, each of which relates, often in an associative manner, to the working-class culture of dockworkers and seafarers.[3] These "objects of interest"–as Sekula defined them–were sourced via the eBay online platform between 2010 and 2013.[4] Part research project, part artists' collection, it tries to assemble iconographies of maritime labor. While a significant part of the collection is made up of photographs, the ensemble also contains small sculptures, toys, paintings, postcards, and other vernacular objects. During his lifetime, around fifty objects and photographs were exhibited in different configurations together with photographs taken from the *Ship of Fools* sequence.[5]

For several of these exhibitions, Sekula selected images that were directly related to the local exhibition contexts, such as, for example, photographs of the reconversion of the Antwerp harbor or docker figurines in local Quimper pottery in Rennes. In her analysis of the images which were added for the Sao Paolo Biennale (2010), Gail Day has argued that they are to be understood in relation to the colonial and exploitative histories of the port of Santos. For her, these images metonymically evoke the different stages of the ports' reconversion towards automation, forcibly confronting the "living" labor power of the Santos dockworkers with the "metaphorical weight of dead labor, the congealment of […] 'vanished' working activities" (Day, 2015, 67).

Apart from these site-specific additions, Sekula kept adding new objects to the collection. Between 2010

3 All the objects are now part of the collection of the Antwerp Museum of Contemporary Art (M HKA). This institution hosted the first installment (2010) of the project and provided partial funding for the project.
4 For an introduction into *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum,* see Van Gelder, 2015.
5 The project was successively exhibited between 2010 and 2013 in the following venues: M HKA, Antwerp (2010), Biennale of Sao Paolo (2010), San Francisco Art Institute (2011-2012), Stills, Edinburgh (2012), La Criée, Rennes (2012), Charles H. Scott Gallery, Vancouver (2012), Lumiar Cité, Lisbon (2013). Installation views of these exhibitions can be consulted in *ibid*.

and 2013, the artist contextualized his additions in public lectures and in interviews with exhibition curators.[6] Here, Sekula not only discussed individual objects, he also described thematic clusters or "sections"–as he defined them–that served as a tentative organizational and conceptual structuring: e.g. *Seafarer Section*, *Mining Section*, *Spine Section*, *Harbor Section*.[7] While these lectures and interviews provide a contextualization of a substantial segment of the collection, the majority of objects are still left to be researched, clustered and mapped. The present essay may be considered as an exercise towards developing a method to decipher the unfinished and fragmentary condition of *The Dockers' Museum*. It will explore how the images in the collection can be used to build an array of sequences that set forth imaginative geographies of historical maritime struggle. With this aim, I will tentatively suggest such a thematic cluster or sequence through an analysis of six images: a cartoon cut out of a radical labor magazine, two press photographs of merchant vessels, a silk-screened anti-war poster, and two press photographs related to the Portuguese revolution. Each of these images can be considered as a micro-historical narrative related to the broader category of mutiny. Various entangled histories of mutiny appear as a recurrent theme in *Fish Story*. These occurrences have as yet received little systematic study.[8] This essay will be informed by references to essays, (unpublished) lectures, interviews and personal notebooks related to *Fish Story*. As *Fish Story* is part of a long-term research into the history, politics and aesthetics of maritime space, it can be considered as a key resource to understand the stakes of *The Dockers' Museum*.[9]

Mutinous imaginary

In *Fish Story*, Sekula considers the mere possibility of reconstructing forms of collectivity or retracing instances of resistance within our current predicament:

> Are there even today, forms of human agency in maritime environments that seek to build a logical sequence of details, a synoptic interpretation of observed events? Is it possible to construct such knowledge from below? Can these questions even be approached in the present tense, in the face of an automated, accelerated, computer-driven, and increasingly monolithic maritime world? (Sekula, 1995a, 133)

These considerations could be viewed as a central preoccupation guiding much of his work, including his project *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*. In the photographic sequence *Ship of Fools*, he assembled a "group portrait" of the crew and activists of the Global Mariner, which he described as an "image representation

6 Sekula discussed the objects in several private interviews. Many of which were recorded. An informative example of such a recorded lecture can be consulted online: Allan Sekula, "Talk at Emily Carr University 25 October," Vancouver, 2012, https://vimeo.com/53897947 (last accessed on September 15th, 2016).

7 The *Mining Section* refers to the political, economic and ecological issues related to resource extraction. The *Spine Section* refers to the physical strain of lifting weight on the human body. See Van Gelder 2015 for an introduction into the different sections. With regards to the Mining Section, see Van Gelder and Setari, 2016.

8 See the discussion between Allan Sekula and Hal Foster at Witte de With, Rotterdam (January 22, 1995). An audio recording exists and can be consulted in the archive of Witte de With. Although not specifically dealing with mutiny, see the following brilliant essays dealing with Sekula's slideshow *Waiting for tear Gas* (1999) on the anti-WTO protests in Seattle: Edwards, 2009; Young, 2012.

9 Sekula, 1995a. *Fish Story* combines documentary photography and short essayistic texts. It exists as a book version and as an exhibition format. The exhibition format is accompanied by two slide sequences that are not included in the book. The book version contains two longer essays that are analysed and referenced to throughout this essay.

of this lifeworld of people aboard the ship who shared […] working class left-wing politics from a variety of different national backgrounds" (Sekula, 2012). Following Benjamin Young, *Ship of Fools* thus falls in line with Sekula's broader "ambition to describe a collective beyond that which fits into a single photographic frame" which leads him "to rework the conventions of group portraiture by linking individual figures to one another, even across great distances, through sequential montage" (Young, 2015, 81).

For *The Dockers' Museum*, Sekula emphatically altered his working method. For this project, he tried to salvage photographic records and artefactual debris that speak of past struggle and of a militant, working class culture that seems to have vanished. *The Dockers' Museum* can be understood as "building a logical sequence of details." This sequence of micro-historical narratives assembled in the collection attempts to evoke–often in an imaginative manner–collective experiences of maritime workers. With *The Dockers' Museum,* Sekula tried to construct what he called an "imaginary lifeworld of a phantasmatic collective. And that collective could be all those who labor on the sea, or who engage in the cargo from sea to shore and shore to sea" (Sekula, 2012).

As Sekula and Noel Burch have argued, the "logistics revolution" entailed a dramatic shift in the "class character of the port cities," and as a consequence "the memory of mutiny and rebellion by dockers, seafarers, fishermen and shipyard workers–struggles that were fundamental to the formation of the institutions of social democracy and free-trade-unionism–fades from public awareness" (Sekula and Burch, 2011, n.p.). As archaic terminology, mutiny is traditionally related to naval or merchant sailors performing an act of collective insubordination against the vessel's command or captain. Such instances would entail a wild cat strike or a hostile take-over of the ship. Sekula decisively extends this idea to waterfront revolts by dockworkers and port communities (Sekula, 1995b).

During his research for *Fish Story*, Sekula was very attentive to instances of mutiny in the twentieth century. He is particularly interested in the string of mutinies and revolts "in the wake the Bolshevik revolution and the anarcho-syndicalist strike wave that engulfed port cities worldwide after the first World War" (Sekula, 1997a, 54). He developed a hypothesis about a prevalent imaginary that projected a looming menace or potential of mutinous insurrection erupting from the waterfront. For him, this "phantom mutiny" haunted the imagination of the left and the right in the twenties and thirties (Sekula, 1995b). The possibilities of large port strikes were related to the need for a large concentration of workers on the waterfront. After the Second World War, the automation and containerization of cargo transport led to a steadfast numerical decline of the workforce on the docks. As Sekula writes, "[h]istorically-militant seagoing and dockside labor had to be tamed and disciplined: the former had to be submitted to the international search for lower wages, the latter subjected to automation" (Sekula 1995a, 49).

In the two essays that accompany the book version of *Fish Story*, Sekula develops an art historical argumentation regarding a shift in the representation of maritime space. The essays retrace a "lineage of representation of [the] sea economy," starting from the mercantilist and imperialist viewpoint embedded in Dutch seventeenth-century seascape painting. The main line of argument then moves on to the subsequent aesthetic fragmentation produced by modernist art and literature and ends at Andy Warhol's standardized—container-like—Brillo soap boxes (Risberg, 1999, 247). According to Sekula, "modernity dissolves the edifying unity of the classical maritime panorama…shatters [it] in thousand metaphoric fragments … [allowing] these details circulate within the generalized stream of consumption" (Sekula 1995a, 106-107). He overlays this visual and

textual history of maritime space with the histories of technological development and automation, including the arrival of steam-powered ships and the development and global proliferation of standardized shipping containers. As ships become more and more reminiscent of factories, the sailor appears as lower form of life, a seaborne *lumpenprole* that is visually and rhetorically constructed in popular culture as physiognomically distinctive from other citizens. His analysis falls in line with his insight that "[c]lass conflict is not simply economic and political in character," but always takes part in a "conflict of representations" (Sekula 1983, 250-251). Sekula frames this "conflict of representations" not only within the industrial advancements of "the age of steam," but also relates it to the widespread social and political upheaval, mutiny and strikes of the interwar periods, erupting in European, Russian and U.S. port cities. He writes that "[f]or conservative regimes, mutiny was an intrusion into the public sphere by those unqualified to speak" (Sekula 1995a, 125). Such transgressive acts were, for Sekula, not unlike the acts of resistance of other non-citizens like those who took part in "slave revolts" or "suffragist struggles" (*ibid.*). He describes how, in his view, these insurrections emerge as a "recurrent, almost obsessive theme within the modernist culture of the 1920s and 1930s" and that "the body and habitus of the sailor becomes the overdetermined nexus of political […] anxiety" (Sekula, 1997a, 54).

Figure 2: Walker Evans, South Street, 1932, New York. Gelatin silver print, 14.2 × 16.1 cm.
© The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles Getty (Getty Open Content).

For Sekula, there are instances where the formal strategies of modernist aesthetic fragmentation are prone to evoke forms of social fragmentation. He describes how "[m]odernist photography discovered [the sailor] as a cancelled worker, an unemployed drifter, a bum" (Sekula 1995a, 125). This insight is prevalent in his analysis of two photographs by Walker Evans. Sekula discusses at length a sequence of two images (Fig. 2)

both entitled *South Street, New York* (1932) which appeared in Evans's *American Photographs* (1938). The first image in the sequence of photographs uses a wider frame that captures the large wooden door of an undisclosed store with a sleeping man sprawled over the doorstep. Two other men appear, each one seated on the sill of one of the two adjacent stores. One of them seems to be tediously reading a newspaper while the other sits hunched against the store door and peers from under the rim of his hat into the lens of Evans's camera. The second image is a close-up of the sleeper. He is lying on pieces of cardboard and has a smudged sailor cap. The latter garment identifies the man as a merchant sailor. Sekula found these photographs particularly striking as the New York waterfront area was at that time indeed affected by an upsurge of unemployment within the ranks of merchant sailors in the aftermath of the economic crisis of the thirties, which forced many of them into vagrancy. What remained implicitly absent within these snapshots of urban destituteness was any reference to the rising discontent that started to develop among the maritime workers across the U.S. (Nelson, 1990). When considering the situation in New York, this period was characterized by a moment of developing "Red Unionism" in and around the harbor (*ibid*., 75-102). This insurrectionary mood–felt also across the country–would lead, in 1934, to the one of largest waterfront strike wave in U.S. history (Lillie, 2009). Notwithstanding the growing social unrest, Evans's images remain strictly within the paradigm of victimization of the photographed subject that characterized U.S. documentary photography at the time (Stein, 1983; Rosler, 2004; Solomon-Godeau, 1991). Evans's photograph merely frames an instance of "abject dereliction" and portrays the sailor "as imprisoned in the immanence of its immediate circumstances" (Sekula 1995a, 129). Evans's photograph portrays the figure of the sleeping seafarer as seemingly devoid of agency and detached from any community or collectivity.

Figure 3: Anonymous, Mutiny [as identified by Allan Sekula], cartoon, graphic digitally rendered as vinyl cut-outs, published Labor Defender, December 1937, variable dimensions.

Mutinous collectives

Sekula added a small cartoon to *The Dockers' Museum* (Fig. 3) that could be considered as intrinsically related to his analysis of Evans's photograph. The cartoon was reproduced as a vinyl cut-out and included in the Rennes and Lisbon exhibitions of *The Dockers' Museum*. The original was cut out from the December 1937 issue of the radical left-wing magazine *Labor Defender*. [10] It depicts two (supposed) ship-owners–one wearing a top hat, the other a *pince-nez* signaling their social class–frantically waving a newspaper or pamphlet adorned with the word "Mutiny." In the background, one sees a ship tied to the dock. A cut-out of the cartoon was glued in his notebook which collects his ongoing research on *Fish Story* for the period May 1993-May 1994. In an earlier notebook, Sekula specified that for him this cartoon was indicative of "the fantasy of mutiny in Am[erican] left press."[11] The magazine article, for which the cartoon was an illustration, describes the development of a seafarer branch for the New York waterfront as part of the radical union I.L.D. (International Labor Defense). The article reports on the activities of the branch: the recruitment of members amongst shipping crews, solidarity during strikes, legal aid, distribution of "defense literature," aid to foreign seafarers, and pickets against war shipments material for the Spanish fascists. It seems relevant to point out that the I.L.D.-branch's waterfront aid center was located on 25 South Street, which is only a few houses removed from the location, 33 South Street, where Walker Evans photographed the sleeping sailor. The cartoon could thus be considered as a counter-image for Evans's photographs. It represents a small token that points to forms of labor militancy and working class communal organizing around the New York docks as opposed to the perceived narrative of atomization and victimhood in the *South Street* photographs.

The Dockers' Museum contains two press photographs, depicting ships, that stand out in a similar manner. Both ships stand in for microhistories of worker struggle, one depicts the SS Navemar (Fig. 4) and the other the SS Swartenhondt (Fig. 5). It is relevant to note here that the ship is an important recurring trope throughout Sekula's writing and photographic work: Battleship Potemkin, the ITF's campaign ship Global Mariner, Titanic or the EXXON Valdez (Sekula, 1995a, 117-124; *ibid*., 18; Sekula, 1997b, 18). While the first two relate to past and present instances of seaborne resistance, the latter two metonymically evoke a possibility of social or environmental disaster ever-present in the shipping industry. Within his writings and photoworks, this metonymic function is also carried out by generic types of ships referring to the vicissitudes of the maritime industries: containerships, cruise ships, war ships, fisher boats, gas carriers, cannery boats and slave ships. Sekula equally employs some iconic ships stemming from literary sources as metonyms, such as Sebastian Brandt's *Ship of Fools*, Herman Melville's *Pequod* or Jules Verne's *Nautilus*.

10 Robins, 1937. All the issues of Labor Defender are digitized. See http://marxistsfr.org/history/usa/pubs/labordefender/index.htm (last accessed on January 8th, 2017).

11 Sekula, *FISH STORY, NOTEBOOK #3, MAY 1992-,* n. p. The note is dated March 24th, 1993.

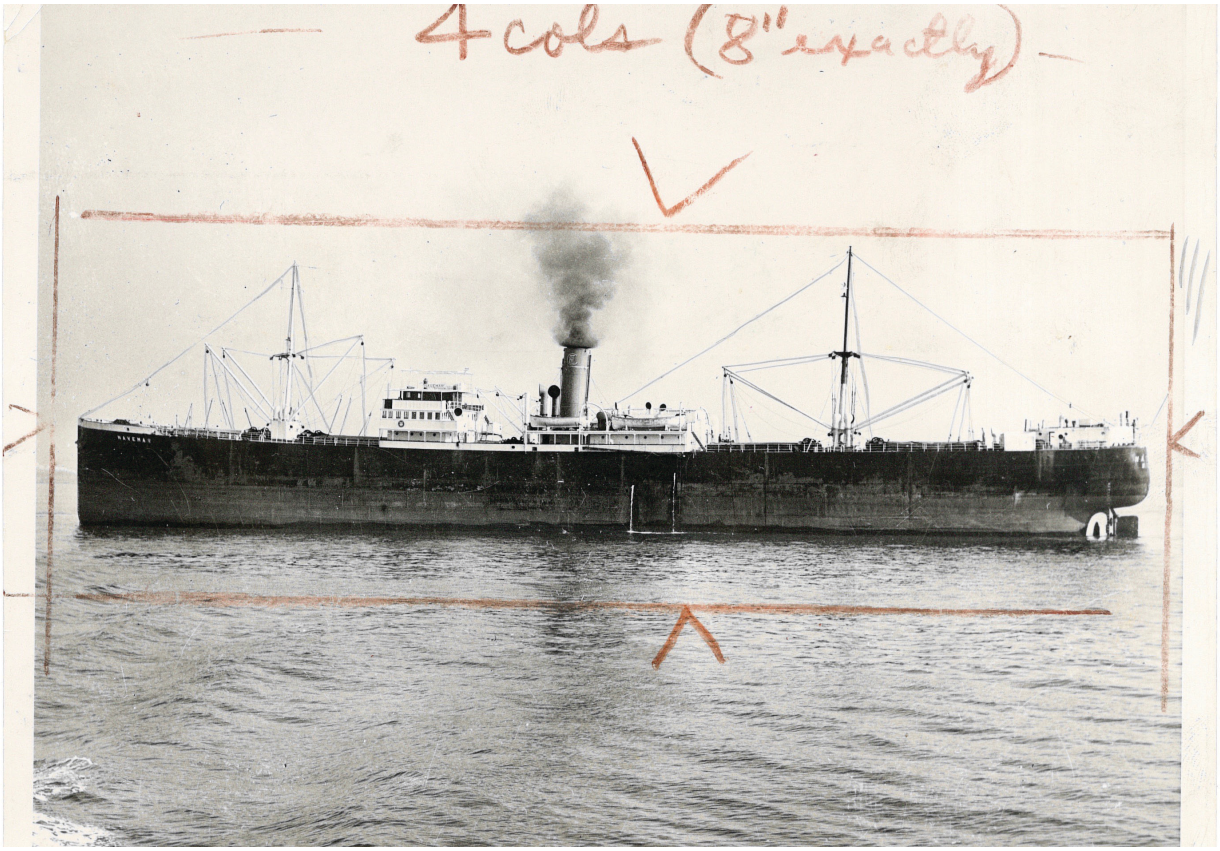

Figure 4: Anonymous, Press Photograph entitled: Spanish boat held in New York after owners charge crew seized her, Wide World Press, December 14, 1936.

The SS Navemar, depicted in the first photograph, was a ship that was part of a private company named Compañia Española de Navegacion Maritima, transporting goods between Latin America and Spain. The available information regarding the SS Navemar remains scarce. The photograph of the freighter was taken in 1936 in the New York harbor where it was held by the port authorities because of a legal dispute with the ship owners.[12] The caption reads: "The crew of thirty-four is now operated by a 'committee' who it is believed is sympathetic to the Spanish Loyalists." The crew seized the freighter when it docked in Buenos Aires during the brief absence of the owner and set off to New York. When U.S. authorities tried to evacuate the crew, they refused to leave the ship and claimed it should be nationalized and turned into the hands of the Spanish Republican government. The ship's owner refuted the republican sovereignty over a privately-owned ship and sued the committee occupying the ship. On a first impression, this incident could be considered as a simple historical footnote. But when viewed under the light of Sekula's larger project, the image of the ship becomes a revealing image, especially because it hints at an instance of mutiny. The timing of the seizure, in the middle of the autumn of 1936, seems particularly relevant as it occurred at the same moment as the violent siege of Madrid by the fascist troops lead by Franco. Under this light, the space of the ship appears here as a counter-site. As the vessel came under the collective command of the crew and due to its peculiar relation to national sovereignty, the ship's hold suddenly becomes an integral part of the anti-fascist struggle happening simultaneously on the other side of the Atlantic. The course of events is reminiscent of Sekula's claim that "the ship is more than the dismal object of political economy, it [can become] poetic, even mutinous" (Sekula 1995a, 112).

12 See "Compania Espanola de Navegacion Maritima, S. A., v. Spanish Steamship Navemar," 1938.

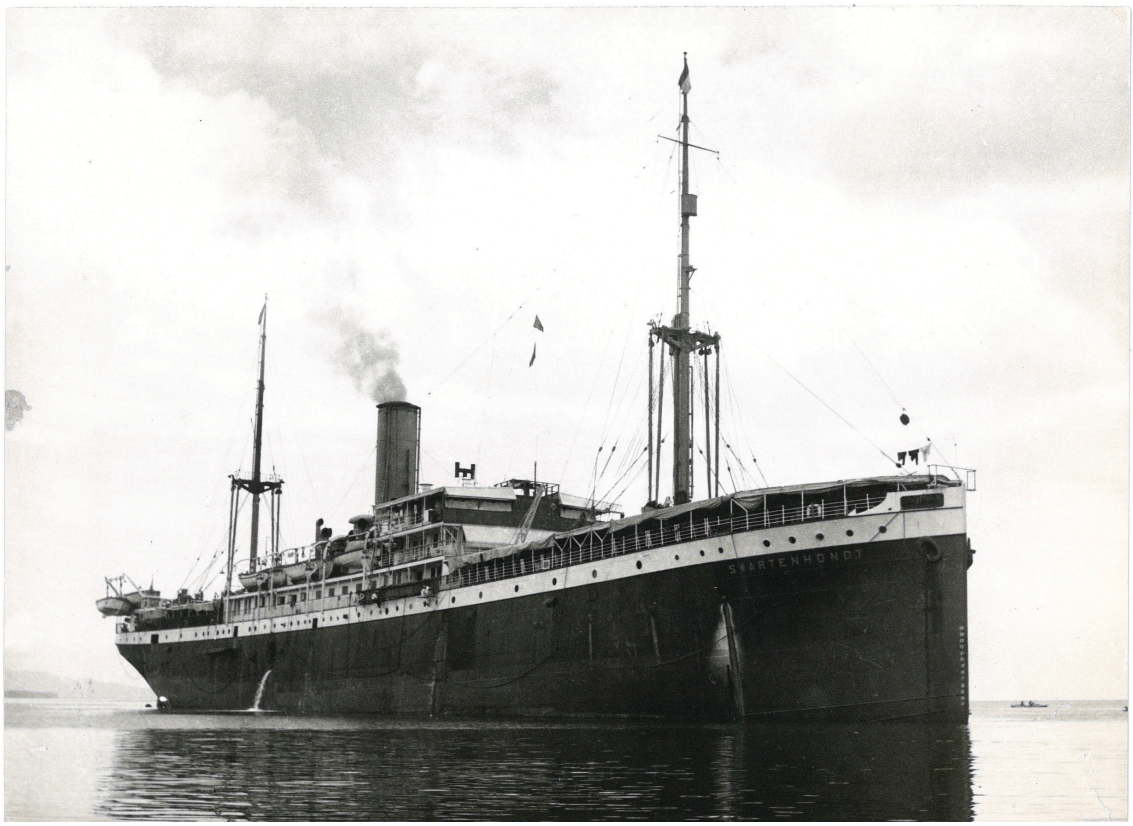

Figure 5: Anonymous, Press Photograph entitled: Escape from Indonesia, Keystone Press Agency, black-and-white photograph, 15.2 x 20.7 cm, undated. © Keystone USA/via Zuma Press.

The second photograph depicting the SS Swartenhondt–a KPM (Koninklijke Pakketvaart Maatschappij) ship–speaks of another historical episode. Since the end of the nineteenth century, the Dutch shipping company KPM was a crucial logistical connection between the Netherlands and its colonies, which then included Indonesia. When after the end of the Second World War the Indonesian people declared their independence, the Dutch government promptly started a military campaign, initially euphemistically described as *policing actions*. In September 1945, Dutch ships deployed in the military operations in the Pacific were being prepared to sail to the Netherlands to bring back armed troops to suppress the anti-colonial uprising. Things took a different turn. The Dutch fleet, or "Black Armada," became the target of systematic boycotts by radical Australian maritime workers sympathetic to the Indonesian cause. They prevented or delayed many ships from sailing back to Indonesia, organized blockades, refused to unload or service ships, and even successfully convinced crews to desert the vessels. In the wake of these boycotts or "black bans," Australian civic support for the Indonesian popular struggle grew beyond the maritime labor movement, pressuring the Australian government into taking the lead towards international recognition of an independent Indonesia in 1949 (Lockwood, 1975).

KPM is now part of the Danish shipping giant Maersk. The history of the Swartenhondt is thus also a reminder of the fact that the infrastructures and shipping routes of our current global supply chains are still materially linked to the spectres of European imperialism and colonialism. At the same time the history of this ship also resonates along later instances of internationalist solidarity by maritime workers. Instances of such acts of solidarity and resistance include for example the 1976 waterfront ban on South African cargo enforced initially to protest the killings in Soweto and, in a second phase, to install an oil embargo against the South African Apartheid regime (Cole and Lind, 2016).

Figure 6: Allan Sekula, Blockade 2 [Scab-loaded Australian container ship Columbus Canada at anchor off Los Angeles-Long Beach Harbor after being blockaded by supporters of embattled Australian dock workers] May 1998, vertical diptych, color photograph, 74 x 174.5 cm, 1998. © Allan Sekula Studio.

Other recent instances are closely linked to Sekula's own work: the blockades of cargo ships between 1997 and 1999 by U.S dockworkers in solidarity with the Australian and Liverpool dockworkers, which are addressed in his work *Freeway to China (Version 2 for Liverpool)* (1998-1999) (Fig. 6), and the 1999 harbor blockade of Seattle as part of anti-WTO protest, which is touched upon in his work *Waiting for Tear Gas* (2000). Even more recent examples would be the harbor blockades on the West Coast of the U.S. that were organized in support of the Occupy Oakland movement and Black Lives Matter, and the blockade of the port at Le Havre in resistance to the new labor laws in 2016 (Fox-Hodess, 2016).

Military mutiny

It is significant that Sekula's earliest published commentary on mutiny appears within his 1991 text *War Without Bodies*. This text was written in the aftermath of the First Iraq War (1990-1991) and is a scathing critique of the jubilant patriotism at the end of the war. In this text he alludes to another specter of mutiny, one which haunted the U.S. Navy since the Vietnam war, namely "the largely unreported draft resistance of those who were already drafted" (Sekula, 1991, 107). With this comment, he refers to the G.I. movement, a grass roots movement of civilians and soldiers, emerging during the final years of the war, that was actively calling for draft refusal (Gibault, 2003). Howard Bruce Franklin argues that the rising resistance against the war from within the U.S. army was a decisive–yet often neglected–factor in ending it. He describes how combat-fatigued soldiers and sailors started to rebel against their involvement in the violent conflict. These revolts not only took on the form of acts of sabotage and mutiny on the battlefield, but were also shaped through legal actions, draft refusal and an underground network for information exchange. In an interview conducted in 1997, Sekula connects this mutinous history to *Fish Story*. He reflects on the contemporary possibilities when soldiers would simply refuse duty in the face of an unwanted or illegitimate armed conflict:

> One reason I'm interested in mutiny in Fish Story is precisely because it's a point when people in the military developed a self-understanding of themselves as workers. That may be a moment of the past in the history of insurrection but given the militarization of the world today we have to imagine at least some potential ground of discontent and revolt amongst those brought into the economy as members of the repressive forces.[13]

Figure 7: Anonymous, Free the Kitty Hawk 21, silk-screened poster, 39 x 28.5 cm, undated [between 1972-1973].

13 Unpublished interview with Allan Sekula conducted by Steve Edwards (London, 1997). The author wants to express his gratitude to Steve Edwards for his permission to include this citation.

There are several objects in *The Dockers' Museum* that seem to refer to such forms of "discontent and revolt" within the military. One of these objects is a silk-screened poster (Fig. 7) calling for the release of the "Kitty Hawk 21." These were a group of African-American sailors that were brought before a military court after their involvement in a riot on the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk. The Kitty Hawk Riot or Kitty Hawk Mutiny, as it became known, broke out in October of 1972, when the ship's already extended mission was once more prolonged. The riot was short-lived and involved a string of violent clashes between black and white sailors and a brief occupation of a segment of the ship (Freeman, 2009). The tensions and insurrectionary mood that was clearly felt throughout the U.S., and especially in the racially and socially segregated inner cities, was now being transposed into the confined spaces of the aircraft carrier's hold (Franklin, 2000, 45-68). Sekula's decision to include this particular anti-war poster seems once again related to his engagements with the historical legacy of mutiny. As he commented: "What interested me [for *Fish Story*] […] was the association of claustrophobic maritime space–the waterfront slum, the hold of the slave ship, the shipyard, the forecastle, the engine room–with the potential for popular insurrection and mutiny" (Sekula 1997a, 54). The mutiny forced the USS Kitty Hawk to promptly abort its mission and to return to the San Diego harbor. The incident on the aircraft carrier was part of a series of incidents, such as a similar rebellion on the USS Constellation and acts of sabotage on other Navy ships. Before the events, the USS Kitty Hawk had already been the subject of a *Stop the Hawk* campaign, calling on the sailors to defect from military service. The micro-history of the riot thus also speaks of a larger socio-political context of emerging anti-imperialist movements in the West and of the radicalization of civil rights movements, such as the Black Panthers.[14]

Figure 8: M. Valentim, Press Photograph entitled: The Brigades of the MFA on their dynamization campaign, Keystone Press Agency, black-and-white photograph 17.7 x 23.9 cm, undated [between 1974-1975].
© Keystone USA/via Zuma Press.

14 On the significance of the riot as collective action, see Clover, 2016.

Two of the collection's press photographs (Figs. 8-9) speak of a military mutiny that led to a broader civil insurrection. The photographs were taken between 1974 and 1975 and are both related to the Portuguese *Carnation Revolution* that lasted between 25 April 1974 and 25 November 1975. The first press photograph depicts a group of military officers addressing a crowd of civilians from a stage. The caption of the (undated) photograph identifies the officers as members of the MFA (Movimento das Forcas Armadas). On April 25th 1974, the MFA, a group of left-leaning young military officers, initiated an uprising–an act of mutiny–against the Portuguese *Estado Novo* dictatorship. This military-led coup was initially aimed at putting an end to the colonial wars in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique (1961-1974). The coup immediately sparked an unforeseen popular mobilization that led ordinary citizens to take to the streets in Lisbon and Porto, blockading roads, government buildings and the port. During the following 19 months, Portugal went through a tumultuous period of radicalizing social conflicts. The coup had unwittingly released a wave of pent-up labor militancy. In its wake, worker movements fought to gain control through an unprecedented string of street protests, strikes and factory occupations.[15] Mark Bergfeld aptly describes this period as one in which "Portugal was to become a laboratory for popular democracy and self-management" (Bergfeld, 2014).

Figure 9: Anonymous, Press Photograph entitled: Putsch manqué au Portugal, Keystone Press Agency, black-and-white photograph, 18 x 23.9 cm (12/03/1975). © Keystone USA/via Zuma Press.

The second press photograph (dated March 12, 1975) was taken during this period. The photograph shows a highway blockade in Lisbon upheld by group civilians. Such blockades were hastily mounted in cities across Portugal in opposition to a right-wing counter-coup led by General Antonio de Spinola. In the three days after the counter-coup, the whole country was brought under lockdown by the worker movements. The photo speaks of the willingness to mobilize and occupy of the Portuguese worker movements that took centre

15 See for an historical perspective 'from below:' Varela and Alacântara, 2014.

stage and led to the failure of the counter-coup (Maxwell, 1995, 108-117; Mailer, 1977). The 19-month period of revolutionary upheaval was eventually appeased–or thwarted–when rivaling fractions in the transitionary government fell in crisis. The radical left fraction of the MFA was finally ousted by a moderate group led by António Ramalho Eanes, who would become the president of Portugal.

Conclusion

Sekula developed an interest in recording those instances of human agency in which small groups of workers, organically and autonomously, tried to organize, gain and maintain forms of worker control in manners that were opposed to the pervasive bureaucratic logic of management or war-prone governments. For Sekula, these instances provided moments–even if ever so precarious or fleeting–in which, following the "heuristic insight" of C.L.R. James, the "everyday culture of the workplace […] provides the basis for solidarity and revolt" (Sekula 1995a, 134). Through connecting *The Dockers' Museum* to the photographic sequence of *Ship of Fools*, this endeavor is brought to full circle. The campaign ship The Global Mariner and its crew of labor activists can be considered to stand for the resurfacing of the idea of mutiny as well in its grass roots activism as in its occurrence as an autonomous collective command of workers.

Sekula explored the potential of internationalist reflections developed in such a way that they extend beyond the localized emplacement of the individual's workplace. This conception of work relates in a pertinent manner to his attentiveness for formations of working class culture in port cities, such as those found around the docks. As Sekula writes,

> dockers enact an international solidarity based on intricate physical, intellectual, and above all social relationships to the flow of material goods. The dockers' line of contact extends outward from what is immediately at hand, to be lifted or stowed, and crosses the horizon to another space with similar immediacies. (Sekula and Sinclair, 2000, 414)

Such a cosmopolitanism from below, where occupational subcultures such as seafarers, dockers and even soldiers, develop forms of global knowledge, solidarity and resistance, is forcefully represented within the collection of images of *The Dockers' Museum*. Sekula's goal becomes even clearer when considering the numerous photographs of dockworkers, stemming from port cities whose local histories are closely linked to the legacies of radical labor. The photographs include images of the militant dockers of Le Havre, Antwerp, Portland, San Francisco, the anarcho-syndicalist dockworker union of Santos (Fig. 10) and the Indian communist dockers' union of Cochin.

As demonstrated in this essay, a close study of *Fish Story* can provide conceptual frameworks for the understanding of *The Dockers' Museum*. In his engagement with the entangled histories of mutiny, Sekula attempts to retrieve something "hopeful" and "resilient" for our contemporary predicament. Taken together, the objects of *The Dockers' Museum* allow to build new and imaginative sequential geographies of historical maritime struggle. These geographies retrace a residual poetics of lost collectivities and outbursts of social conflict. It seeks out and connects those representations of human agency that metonymically evoke the intersubjective dimension of work and struggle. By bringing together a vast collection of images, *The Dockers*

Figure 10: Anonymous, Postcard entitled: Santos Carregadores de Café, black-and-white photo postcard, 8.9 × 13.7 cm, undated.

Museum allows for what Gail Day has described as "stories [to] unfold from artefactual metonymies … [that] are as much anticipatory as re-collective; their purpose neither simple reminders to re-cognize our world, but more centrally and vitally they elicit paraxial time" (Day, 2015, 63).

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Fig. 3. Anonymous, *Mutiny [as identified by Allan Sekula]*, cartoon, graphic digitally rendered as vinyl cut-outs, originally published in *Labor Defender* (December 1937), variable dimensions.

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Fig. 8. M. Valentim, *Press Photograph entitled: The Brigades of the MFA on their dynamization campaign*, Keystone Press Agency, black-and-white photograph 17.7 x 23.9 cm, undated [between 1974-1975]. © Keystone USA/via Zuma Press.

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